

THE THEOLOGY AND MORALITY

OF THE

GREAT EXHIBITION,

AS SET FORTH IN CERTAIN

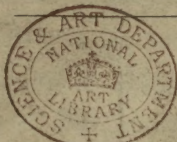
LEADING ARTICLES WHICH HAVE LATELY APPEARED IN

"THE TIMES" AND "RECORD" NEWSPAPERS.

BY

A Spiritual Watchman of the Church of England.

"Here is BRITAIN ROW, the FRENCH ROW, the ITALIAN ROW, the SPANISH ROW, the GERMAN ROW, where several sorts of vanities are to be sold. But, as in other fairs, some one commodity is the chief of all the fair; so the ware of Rome and her merchandise is greatly promoted in this fair."—*Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress"*—"Vanity Fair."



LONDON:

WILLIAM EDWARD PAINTER, 342, STRAND.

1851.

Price Sixpence.

26.11.67.

WILLIAM EDWARD PAINTER, 342, Strand, London, Printer.

INTRODUCTION.

"Often as the motley reflexes of my experience move in long processions of manifold groups before me, the distinguished and world-honoured company of Christian Mammonists appear to the eye of my imagination as a drove of camels heavily laden, yet all at full speed, and each in confident expectation of passing through the eye of the needle, without stop or halt, both beasts and baggage."

Coleridge.

THE writer of the following pages is aware that his remarks are not likely to meet with a very favourable reception from the admirers and worshippers of the "World's Fair" in Hyde-park. Woe be to that unlucky wight who, in these days, shall dare to move his tongue or pen against the idol of science and intellect—which all the world is wondering after! The enemy is come in like a flood, and it requires no small courage and faith to stem the torrent of worldliness and vanity which threatens to sweep away all that is dear to an English Bible Christian. And, what is worse than all, the people of England love to have it so. English religion, English morality, English simplicity and integrity, they seem inclined to barter for the loose theology and meretricious pleasures of anti-Christian countries. Bunyan, in his inimitable allegory, when describing "Vanity Fair," says—"But, as in other fairs, some one commodity is the chief of all the fairs, so the ware of Rome and her merchandise is greatly promoted in this fair;" he *then* could also add with truth, "only our English nation, with some others, have taken a dislike thereat."

We much doubt if he could say so now : the wares and merchandise of Rome will be greatly promoted by the "World's Vanity Fair" in London, and the English nation evinces no particular dislike thereto.

In such times of degeneracy and apostacy the Christian has, however, a duty to perform—a duty paramount to every consideration of worldly expediency or the fear of man ; and in such times the Christian minister has an especial duty to perform, inasmuch as it is particularly required of stewards that a man be found faithful to his Master's cause through evil report and good report. Had the friends and promotor of the Exhibition kept the scheme within its legitimate limits, and endeavoured to promote its success solely as a work of science and art and a place of worldly amusement, the writer would not have considered himself called upon to take any public notice of it, beyond a passing note of warning to his flock from the pulpit against the snares and dangers of that great and wicked city of London when deluged with continental abominations. But when an attempt has been made, through the medium of the most influential portions of the public press, both secular and religious, to give what is called a "religious" character to this Vanity Fair, and most profanely (as we think) to hold it forth as the work of Almighty God, we cannot conscientiously remain silent, inasmuch as we do in our conscience consider that by such proceedings an insult is offered to the Majesty of heaven.

THE

THEOLOGY OF THE EXHIBITION.

THE very idea of giving a sacred character to anything so entirely of a worldly nature does appear so monstrous that we could not have supposed it possible to have been conceived in the heart of man ; and our surprise would not have been greater had we been informed that her Majesty had issued her royal mandate to the Metropolitan to preside with prayer at the opening of Drury-lane Theatre or the Opera House ; but we live in strange and perilous times. The first notice of the kind appeared in the *Times* newspaper about a month or two ago, in the shape of a brief letter from an anonymous correspondent, recommending the *preparation* of a form of prayer for a blessing on the Exhibition to be used in all the churches. That passed away, as we hoped, without notice : we looked upon it as an effusion of Popish or Tractarian superstition which would not find many supporters. In the course, however, of a week or two, the subject was again taken up by the editor of the *Times* in one of his powerful leading articles, evidently prepared with much care and premeditation and under the sanction of high authority ; and which had, doubtless, considerable influence upon the arrangements of the 1st of May. It is this article to which we wish particularly to call the attention of our readers. It appeared in the *Times* of the 18th of April, and contains the most

grievous and unscriptural error under the most specious guise ; and that, too, under high and illustrious patronage and support. The writer begins with quoting, as a text for his homily, a passage or two from a speech of an illustrious personage at the Mansion-House in the spring of last year—a speech remarkable for eloquence and good feeling ; but a speech which, with all due deference and respect, we are compelled to say was exceedingly erroneous in a scriptural point of view. The particular passage of that speech to which we allude, as quoted by the *Times*, is as follows :—“So man is approaching a more complete fulfilment of that great and sacred mission which he has to perform in this world. His reason being created in the image of God, he has to discover the laws by which the Almighty governs His creation ; and, by making these laws his standard of action, to conquer nature to his use, himself a divine instrument.”

Now, we do most conscientiously consider the doctrine of this passage to have no foundation whatever in the word of God—nay, rather to be repugnant thereto. If we turn to the history of man's creation in the sacred volume, we find that his mission was simply to dress and keep the garden of Eden and to serve and obey his Creator ; and that, so far from having any mission to pry into the laws by which the Almighty governs His creation, he was expressly forbidden so to do. The only forbidden tree in the garden was the tree of science and intellect ; and it is a remarkable fact that the argument used by the serpent to seduce Eve from her allegiance to her Creator is almost precisely the same as that used by modern philosophers—“Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil”—*i. e.*, as wise as God Himself. Com-

pare this with the passage I have quoted—"Man's reason being created in the image of God, he has to discover the laws by which the Almighty governs His creation; and, by making these laws his standard of action, to *conquer nature to his use*, himself a *divine instrument*"—and where is the difference between the two in the doctrine inculcated?

The error of this doctrine consists in this—that it tends to flatter and encourage the pride of man and to exalt the creature above the Creator, and to lead in the end to Atheism, or at least to low thoughts of the Deity. If man, by the help of his carnal reason and those mutilated and crippled intellectual powers which are all that he inherits of the image of God since the fall, could discover the arcana of the creation and conquer and subdue the elements for his use, the natural consequence would be that he would look upon himself as a god and a creator, and of course have low and incorrect thoughts of the Divine and Almighty Architect of the Universe, and also would soon learn to despise the beautiful and sublime works of God; as the child, when it has pulled its plaything to pieces to see what it is made of, tramples it under foot as worthless: "familiarity breeds contempt." Man's mission was not to find out God in creation, but to seek and find God in Christ as a Saviour and Redeemer. Man's reason *now* is not the image of God, but it is enmity against God: it exalteth itself against God: the world by wisdom knew not God, and we are expressly told by the Divine Saviour Himself that God has hid the things of Himself from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes. The more men advance in carnal science and intellect the farther they get from the saving knowledge

of God, and wander upon the dark mountains of error and infidelity : the light that is in them becomes darkness, and, then, how great is that darkness!

We repeat it—that God never intended that man should know the secrets of creation ; and so intricate and unfathomable are they that, after all his puny efforts, man knows little or nothing ; nor is it for his present or future happiness that he should know these things. If man could by art and science conquer nature, controul and subdue the elements, and himself restore a lost world, God would not be in all his thoughts—his soul neglected and forgotten—and he would never seek after that happier land, that better country, even a heavenly. In short, the doctrine of modern philosophers tends to overthrow the whole tenor of inspiration and revelation, which assures us that this earth is lost and polluted—cursed and doomed ; that it is not the home or rest of the Christian ; and that its end is to be destroyed by fire, with all the works of vain man, before it can again be a peaceful and blessed habitation.

Thus much we have, with all due respect and deference, considered it our duty to remark upon the well-meant but erroneous speech at the Mansion-House. But, before we finish what we have to say on this head, we pass on to notice the editorial remarks of the *Times* on the same subject. We pass over the grandiloquent moonshine with which the editor prefaces his homily when he talks of the “great sacrament of nature and the priesthood of science ;” and we invite attention to the following remarks :—

“The first verse of the Bible (says the editor of the *Times*) tells us that the Deity disclosed to us in that book is also the Maker of heaven and earth ; and in the

same volume we are expressly told *that the craft of the artizan is a special gift of inspiration.*"

To this latter assertion we feel inclined, in a great degree, to demur. The writer, we suppose, is alluding to the construction of the tabernacle in the wilderness and to the 31st and 34th chapters of the book of Exodus, where we read that two men, Bezaleel and Aholiab, were selected and inspired by God to be the architects, and others in whom the Lord put wisdom and understanding. Thus spake the Lord unto Moses : "See, I have called by name Bezaleel, the son of Uri, and I have filled him with the Spirit of God in wisdom and understanding, &c., to devise cunning works, to work in gold and silver and in brass, in cutting of stones, and carving of timber," &c. Now, it is plain to any reflective and serious reader that the gifts of these artizans were altogether supernatural, only and expressly given at that particular time for the particular purpose of enabling them to build the temporal abode of the Divine glory and presence, and that without an extraordinary inspiration they could not have erected the same. In this view we are borne out by that eminent commentator on the Bible, the Rev. Thomas Scott, who in his notes upon the passage thus remarks :—"The *supernatural* qualifications of Bezaleel and Aholiab proved their *divine* appointment : they had an *express* qualification for their work : they were also *miraculously* qualified to instruct and superintend their assistants. They were not, however, allowed to exercise *their own ingenuity in contriving* any decorations to embellish the sanctuary, but merely to devise how to execute the commands of God with exactness, readiness," &c. To this we may add that, generally speaking, the Scriptures

would lead us to believe that the skill and ingenuity of man, in arts and sciences, are by the inspiration of the god of this world rather than of the God of heaven.

In the 4th chapter of the book of Genesis, verses 21-22, we read that Jubal and Tubal-Cain, the immediate descendants of the wicked Cain, were the fathers of all such as handle the harp and the organ, and the instructors of every artificer in brass and iron. Again : when our Lord was tempted in the wilderness, Satan showed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, and said, "All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them ; for that is delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will I give it," &c. Once more : our Lord Himself declares—"All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but of the world." And, whatever difference of opinion there may be upon the meaning or application of these texts, we think there can be but one opinion upon the profaneness and presumption of instituting a comparison between the Tabernacle in the wilderness and the Crystal Palace in Hyde-park.

Time will not allow us to review the whole of the bulky article to which we allude : one passage more we feel bound to notice. The writer, speaking of the necessity of some religious observance at the opening of the Exhibition, goes on to say—"Perhaps, it is not ours to suggest the form and manner of the religious observance to be selected. In *former* days, and on the continent, the Exhibition would be opened with a solemn service, and *the great mystery of our faith* would be celebrated before the eyes of prostrate multitudes." In other words, did we but happily live in the palmy days of Popish superstition and idolatry, the Exhibition

would have been opened with a solemn mass and a procession of the Host, before which our Queen would fall prostrate, with the myriads of her subjects ; and in his heart (says the editor of the *Times*)—"O, that it were so!" The Crystal Palace itself, he remarks, is built in the form of a *Cathedral*, and nothing but "diversities of language and creed" present a fatal bar to such a desirable ceremonial. And this, too, from the great champion of Protestantism against Papal aggression! How sweet and pleasant to the taste of Cardinal Wiseman must such sentiments be, sent forth under the patronage and influence of the leading journal of Europe! What joy and rejoicing within the walls of the Vatican when a copy of the *Times* of the 18th of April is laid before his Holiness! See, he will say, how our erring children in England are longing to return to the true faith! They are, indeed, jealous of our *political* interference ; but our spiritual interference and blessing they ardently desire. Well, be it so ; only let us have the *spirituals*, and won't we get the *temporals*?

We cannot take leave of the theology of the Exhibition without a few remarks upon a leading article of another paper on the same subject—viz., the *London Record*. We are never surprised at anything we meet with in the *Times* ; but, from a paper of the established principles and professions of the *Record*, we did not expect to see an attempt to reconcile and unite God and Mammon. What, then, was our surprise and sorrow when, on opening the *Record* of the 5th of May, we read the following remarks in the editorial article :—"The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all that have pleasure therein. This vast and beautiful building which has spring up in a night, and all the wonders

it contains, show forth the glory and majesty of the everlasting King, and justly demand the tribute of high admiration and the song of loudest praise to the FIRST CAUSE of all." Not only do we see the glory and the majesty of the everlasting King in the materials of the Crystal Palace, but in its contents ; and some of these the writer particularly notices—viz., the "*naked statu-ary.*" "This (he says) abounds in various directions. It is to be gazed upon by the masses of English people, hitherto for the most part uncontaminated by this prolific source of immodesty and vice ; which is *offensive to modesty, polluting to morals, and unworthy of man.*"

Upon reading these passages we asked ourselves this simple question—If there is any sense in what we call the context of a passage, what does the editor mean by coupling the name of the High and Holy One who inhabiteth eternity, and who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, with what he himself says is the "prolific source of immodesty and vice, polluting to morals, and unworthy of man?" We pen these remarks in real sorrow that the *Record* should have so far departed from its original position as an evangelical and religious journal. We have been subscribers to the *Record* from its commencement: we helped to launch it on the troubled waters of ephemeral literature in troublous times ; and, when at one time an attempt was made to sink it, we took in two copies to help it to struggle on. We think, therefore, we cannot fairly be said to have set down "aught in malice" in what we wish to be a friendly and faithful rebuke. We have observed for some time past that the *Record* has been gradually becoming less faithful, and more fearful of offending the powers that be. It is true, he still shows up the "danc-

ing clergy," not however in a Christian and scriptural manner; for, admitting as we do that such ministers are worthy of universal reprobation, yet we consider the scriptural method would be to tell them of their fault privately, and then to the Church, before their names were branded in the public papers as heathen men and publicans; and upon this point we would further remark that, from all accounts which have reached us, we much doubt if the ball-room is in any respect worse than the Exhibition; and this much more we will be bold to say that, in our humble opinion, a clergyman going to a ball or a dance is not half so likely to injure his parishioners as the one who takes his flock up to London to see the Exhibition, as we are informed many are about to do. The dancing clergyman is chiefly his own enemy—his folly and inconsistency are open to all men; but the man of holy and sacred character and profession who deliberately heads his people, young and old, and plunges them into the snares and dangers of that great and wicked metropolis, giving them a taste for worldly gaiety and dissipation, is answerable for all the moral and spiritual pollution they may contract; but this comes of *consecrating* the *Crystal Cathedral*. What harm (they may say) can possibly follow, now that a sacred character has been given to the building?

THE
MORALITY OF THE EXHIBITION.

WE have been led to say so much upon what we have designated as the theology of the Exposition that we have not time or space to dwell much on its immoral tendency. Upon this point, the testimony of the *Record*, which we have quoted, might be amply sufficient. That it will be the means of bringing a flood of continental immorality and pollution, throughout the length and breadth of our land, there can be no doubt from what has already transpired. A short time since, we saw it stated in one of the public newspapers that a lady had let her mansion in London to a foreigner, apparently of rank and respectability, ostensibly for the use of his family during the Exhibition season ; but, when all preliminaries were settled, she found to her dismay that her house had been engaged for the vilest purposes, and that the engagement could not be cancelled ! This, we believe, to be far from a solitary instance, besides gambling-houses and other abominations. That the Exhibition will greatly tend to advance the interests of Popery is also much to be feared.

In a letter which appeared in a late number of the *Record* the writer speaks of the multiplicity of Roman Catholic emblems which meet the eye on all sides. One room, he says, is fitted up with nothing else. "On the right hand, and on the left, you meet with altars dressed up in all the gorgeous finery of the Church of Rome—cardinals and archbishops decked out in all

their trumpery—madonnas of wax and stucco dressed out in lace—cowls, hoods, reliques, and beads ; but, above all this, you see the image of that Holy One for our sakes nailed to the cursed tree exposed in all directions, and amid the most incongruous accompaniments, to the idle gaze.” And all this (as he says) “with royal assent and archiepiscopal sanction ;” and (as we are exhorted to believe) showing forth “the glory and majesty of the everlasting King.” Well ! but, say its admirers, has not everything gone off well, without the slightest drawback or breach of peace and decorum ? Very likely it is so, and will be so : meanwhile who can tell, or who will ever know, the tenth part of the eternal injury it will entail upon thousands of immortal souls ! As an eloquent writer in his lectures on the “Pilgrim’s Progress” remarks : “It was rare that any of those who stopped to become entangled with the cares and pleasures of ‘Vanity Fair’ ever again set out upon a pilgrimage. I have heard, however, that many of them, when they came to die, were found in great gloom and distress, and could get no peace whatever, crying out continually, ‘O that I had ever ceased to be a pilgrim !’ ”

In conclusion, we beg most sincerely to disclaim any wish or intention to speak disrespectfully of the illustrious originators and patrons of the Great Exhibition. We have no doubt everything has been done with the best intentions, mistaken and erroneous as we in our conscience believe them to be. We could not resist the imperative impulse we felt to lift up our feeble voice in behalf of the injured cause of God in this matter. Man has been deified and lauded to the skies : the Almighty Creator merely asked to grace the

triumph of human art. We do not mean to say one word against the prayer offered up which was scriptural and unexceptionable ; but, in our humble judgment out of place and season.

The Crystal Palace cannot, by any ingenuity of argument, be made anything more or less than it is—simply a splendid piece of human art dedicated to Mammon. How much better to have let it remain as it was, without attempting to bring religion to its aid, vainly endeavouring to unite God and Mammon ! But it would appear, from an expression in the *Times*, that the religious ceremony had another end in view—viz., to “*propitiate*” heaven in favour of the speculation ; the promoters, it would seem, having some misgivings as to its nature and tendency. Now, we must protest against this term, “to *propitiate* the Deity,” being both Pagan and Popish. Only perform some religious rites and ceremonies and the Deity will be propitiated, and no evil consequences will follow any deed you commit ! Consecrate your theatres and casinos, your race-courses and tea-gardens, and everything will be lawful or venial ! Sprinkle holy water upon your naked statues and indecent pictures, and the evil eye and thought will become chaste and pure ! Carry out this principle of consecration and propitiation, and there is no species of worldliness or dissipation that may not be sanctified. It is this, too, which is paving the way for Popery in its worst form—that form which it is so fearfully assuming, in these last and perilous times, in its union with worldliness and infidelity, ushering in the final apostacy and the full development of the “Man of Sin.”

In these days most people “are lovers of pleasure

more than lovers of God :” at the same time, they are great sticklers for the outward forms of religion. Religion of some kind is fashionable, and Popery is just the religion for the times, so pleasing and accommodating, presenting no let or hindrance to the fullest indulgence of the lusts of the flesh, and withal so impressive to the superstitious mind—so soothing to the troubled conscience !

On the continent we learn, from the Paris correspondent of the *Times*, that during the late season of Lent, and particularly on Good Friday, “the change from devotional practices to worldly enjoyments was peculiarly marked.” There might be seen the fair and the high-born thronging from the altar and the confessional, where they had just bent in all the humility of repentance, now negligently reclining on the silken cushions of their carriages, with bouquets of the richest flowers in one hand, the richly bound Prayer Book in the other, all bent on pleasure ; and, again, the same reckless crowds might be found in the stillness of the twilight along the Gothic aisles of Notre Dame, their lips clung to the cold marble, the heart heaving to the dolorous canticles of the *tenèbres*, the eye moistened, and the head bowed lowly as the relics were borne along.

Somewhat similar scenes have, we fear, been witnessed in London during the present month of May : churches and chapels and public rooms, with Sabbath and week-day services, theatres, operas, balls and concerts, exhibitions and gardens, overflowing with the same thoughtless crowds. In short, we may say, never was the broad road so thronged since the world began.*

* It is remarkable, and to us unaccountable, that not a single English bishop or archbishop was present at either of the anniversary meet-

These are the things which make us tremble for our beloved country and fear the wrath of Him who is a jealous God, and who will not allow His honour to be given to the creature, and who is not to be mocked with *propitiatory* sacrifices of the lips whilst the heart is given to the world and Mammon.

“Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.” When Saul, the King of Israel, thought to enlist the favour of heaven upon his covetousness and disobedience, by a *propitiatory* sacrifice of a part of the spoil, he lost not only the favour of God, but also his kingdom. May the Lord in His infinite mercy avert from these realms those evils which we have most righteously deserved!

ings of the British and Foreign Bible Society or the Church Missionary Society; though, at the same time, the Primate was officially present at the opening of the Exhibition; and, at her Majesty's concert, on the 12th of May, there appear the names of four archbishops and two bishops.

POSTSCRIPT.

SINCE the foregoing pages have been sent to press, a letter has appeared in the *Times*, exposing still further the *animus* of the Exhibition in its treatment of the Word of God. The writer states that, when the agents of the Bible Society applied for permission to exhibit their copies in one hundred and thirty different languages, they at first met with a flat refusal, and at last they only obtained a space for the Bible in a back room in a by-passage; whereas the works of Mr. Pugin and other Popish exhibitors are set off to the best advantage. But this is only in character and keeping with all the rest. Verily, good old John Bunyan was right when he said that the ware of Rome and her merchandise was greatly promoted in "Vanity Fair!"

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1841